

SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND HOV PROGRAM



Union Bay Natural Area transforms a former landfill site into a wetland

Project overview

The Union Bay Natural Area (UBNA) Mitigation Project is a collaborative effort by the University of Washington and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in consultation with the Center for Urban Horticulture and many others. When complete, the project will add or enhance about 22 acres of wetlands and buffer areas. The project includes the creation of two new wetlands totaling about 1.25 acres. One wetland at a former parking lot was created by tearing out the lot, removing old-landfill material and laying down a clay liner to ensure that hazardous materials from the landfill do not leach into the wetland.

Around the outside of the wetlands, crews are adding new buffer areas and enhancing existing ones. The buffer areas help prevent erosion, filter runoff and provide wildlife habitat.

Phase one: invasive tree and vegetation removal

One of the first steps of the project was to remove invasive plants such as blackberry, purple loosestrife, yellow garden loosestrife, and reed canary grass on 19.5 acres throughout the site. White poplars, an invasive tree species, were removed from the area near the north end of Douglas Road. Meanwhile, WSDOT and the UW coordinated to protect rare, mature trees around the site, including pine trees, madronas, and a dawn redwood.

New landscaping includes 70,000 native plants

Logs and plants are being brought in to renew the UBNA site. Dead logs already on site and new logs brought in are being used to create wildlife habitat and add nutrients to the soil. More than 70,000 native shrubs, emergent wetland plants and other vegetation are being planted to replace the invasive species that crews removed. About 2,700 native trees will be planted on site, including 100 along Douglas Road. Tree species that will be planted include



Union Bay Natural Area mitigation site vicinity map.



70,000 native plants will replace invasive species.

Oregon ash, Sitka spruce, shore pine, Pacific willow and western red cedar. Planting has already begun and is scheduled to be complete by this spring. The picture above shows a few of the plants that will be added, as well recently installed signage.

Shorebird habitat improvements and protection for nesting birds

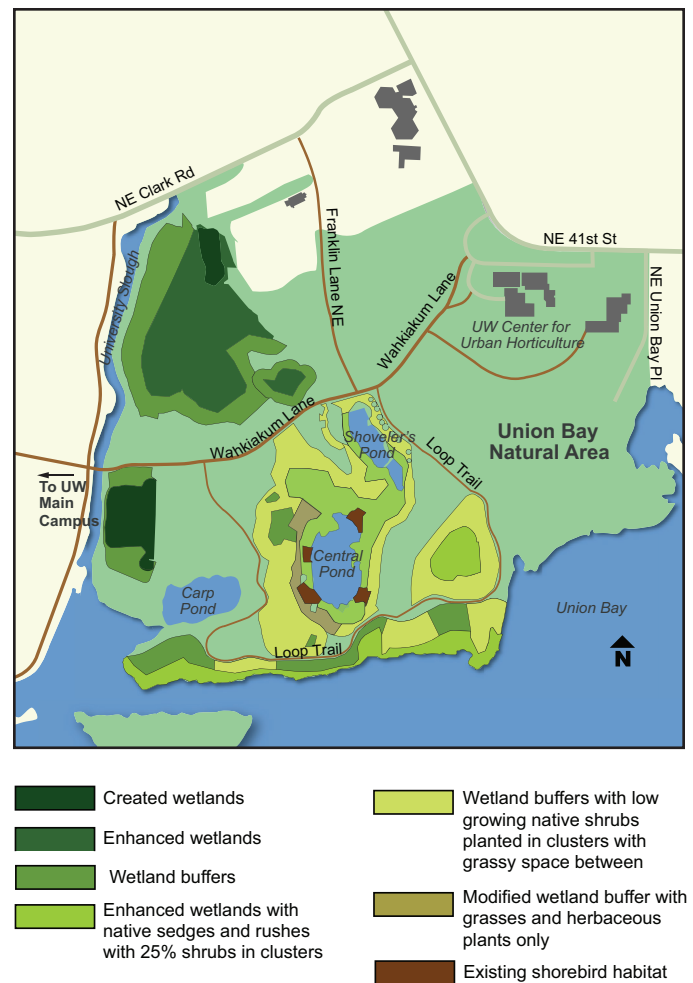
WSDOT worked to protect nesting birds at the site, including a nesting pair of ospreys that made the site their home. As a result, construction activities such as excavation were prohibited from March 1 through July 31 to protect the birds. Crews also placed a 150-foot buffer around the nest to give the birds more space.



A killdeer stands along the shoreline of Lake Washington.

WSDOT partners

During the design of the UBNA mitigation project, WSDOT received input on the plan from several groups, including the University of Washington, the birding community and regulatory agencies. Based on the discussions, WSDOT changed the design of the wetland mitigation plan by decreasing shrub planting density, maintaining offsets at trail edges and along Wahkiakum Lane, and removing Scouler's willow from the plans. We also added woody shrub plantings along the west side of a pond to allow for a wider area of grassy and herbaceous plants. WSDOT was not able to make all changes requested by the birding community because certain changes did not remain consistent with our mitigation commitments.



Conceptual design for the UBNA mitigation site

Project completion slated for April 2017

While Douglas Road has been removed to create a more natural area around the wetlands, visitors can still access the trails at Wahkiakum Lane, Franklin Place Northeast and the loop trail during construction and into the future. This long-term project will continue to establish wildlife habitat and native species for decades to come. The map above shows a conceptual map of the completed site.

For more information

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Department of Transportation**

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